

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

865D.154

SEE 865d.01/107 FOR #1710

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED May 29, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1137 e.e.

### REGARDING:

Roads. Road work to be started immediately is the improvement of all existing roads, which are to be put in condition for traffic during rains. Road tolls abolished.

re

865D.154/1

page 12 of despatch under reference) is the improvement of all existing roads, which are to be put in condition for traffic during the rains. The road building program, it is announced, will give employment to 1,000 engineers, etc., 30,000 Italian laborers, and 70,000 natives. Road superintendents' houses, Road Militia guard posts, carabinier posts, and supply depots will be built along all the new roads.

The Jimma road will be carried to the Sudan frontier, while the Addis Ababa - Allata road will go to the Kenya border across the Lake region.

Public bus services are now operating between Diredawa and Harrar. Road tolls have been abolished.

The Royal Automobile Club has offered to build quarters for road superintendents along paved roads in Somalia and the Ogaden, auto repair shops, and hostels.

By the end of August, the road between Buloburti (terminal of the railway from Mogadiscio) and Belet Wen is expected to be opened, several hundred men now working at top speed on the Buloburti-Gorrahei tract, and within the current year the road up the Faf valley to Mustahil, and a project is being completed for a Gorrahei-Harrar and a Mustahil-Dolo artery.

1 Encl  
1936  
JUN 10 6-3 42-E-10  
OFFICE CHIEF OF STAFF  
MIL., INTEL. ■■■  
WAR DEPARTMENT

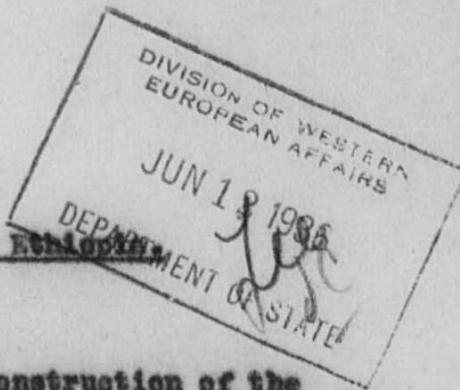


FOR OFFICIAL USE  
COPY FURNISHED  
THE AMERICAN EMBASSY  
Rome, Italy.

ITALY (ECONOMIC).

Subject: ROADS - General.

Plans for a Road-Net in Ethiopia.



*Stg 154*  
Under the heading of "Immediate construction of the Ethiopian Road-Net", the Italian press publishes the following communiqué:

"The Duce, as Minister for the Colonies, has mapped out the plans for the road-net in Ethiopia, and has already given instructions to the effect that construction of the following roads be started at once:

Road:	OM AGER - GONDAR - DEBRA TABOR - DESSIE	km.
"	DEBRA TABOR - DEBRA MARCOS - ADDIS ABABA	500
"	ADIGRAT - DESSIE - ADDIS ABABA . . . . .	850
"	ASSAB - DESSIE . . . . .	500
"	ADDIS ABABA - GIMMA . . . . .	300

TOTAL: Kilometers, 2,800

At a later date, construction will be started of road ADDIS ABABA - ALLATA - HAGHILLI - DOLO, about 1100 km. long, joining the capital with the lakes region and with SOMALILAND. At the same time the construction of secondary roads will be started, branching from the high roads and leading to minor centers of Ethiopia. The roads are all to be macadamized, with permanent bridges and other works where necessary, in order to ensure traffic in all seasons.

A technical Bureau has been organized at ADDIS ABABA, under the control of the State Autonomous Organization for Roads (Ministry of Public Work).

The maintenance of roads will be entrusted to a special organization of road-laborers, and safety to the Road Militia."

COMMENT:

The key to control of Abyssinia is communications. Mussolini follows the Roman system.

The cost of these roads will certainly be enormous, but Italians are noted for their road making skill and thus far no stringency of lire has been noted.

These roads will also be of strategic value.

The ASSAB - DESSIE road and the branch DESSIE - ADDIS ABABA will tend to divert traffic from the ADDIS ABABA-GIBUTI railroad.

France was largely responsible for dissuading Italy from constructing (according to the Italo-Abyssinian accord of 1928) the ASSAB - DESSIE road; and now she will probably see the breakdown of her monopoly of Abyssinian import and export transportation.

For the Military Attaché:

THOMAS D. WHITE,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Acting Military Attaché.

865D. 154/2

FILED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE JUN 19 1936

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF ARMS AND MUNITIONS CONTROL



June 15 1936  
DIVISION OF  
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM

1936 JUN 16 AM 10 42  
June 15, 1936.

NE:  
A-C/C:

General Wm. C. Green  
Division of Arms and Munitions Control  
The only conceivable purpose of the proposed press release, in regard to new road construction in Ethiopia, submitted to the Department for approval, by the Department of Commerce, would appear to be to inform American commercial interests of a trade opportunity for road building machinery and road building material. It would seem that its publication by the Department of Commerce would be so construed. If these assumptions are well founded, the publication of the press release would be definitely contrary to the policy of this Government in respect to promotion of trade with the belligerents. If NE concurs in this opinion, it is suggested that A-C/C may wish to inform the appropriate officer of the Department of Commerce of the Department's opinion as set forth above.

X - C - G  
Joseph C. Green.

CA:JCG:EBJ

CG

865D. 154/3

RECD 1 JUL 1936

FP

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

June 11

~~Mr. Morgan~~  
~~Mr. Morgan~~  
~~for Consul General~~  
~~for~~



CA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE

WASHINGTON

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1936 JUN 16 AM 10 42

June 11, 1936

DIVISION OF  
INVESTIGATIONS  
IN REPLY REFER TO  
AND RECORDS

To: Mr. James J. Murphy, Jr.  
Liaison Officer,  
Department of State

The following press release has been prepared in the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, based on E. & T. Note No. 423 from Assistant Commercial Attaché Malcolm P. Hooper in Rome. We should like to know whether there will be any objection on the part of the Department of State to the publication of this statement:

"NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN ETHIOPIA PLANNED"

"Construction of a network of roads in Ethiopia has just been announced by the Italian Minister of the Colonies, according to a report to the Commerce Department from Assistant Commercial Attaché M. P. Hooper, Rome. Work will begin immediately, it is pointed out, on a number of main arteries involving a total of 2,800 kilometers (1750 miles).

"Later it is planned to construct a road connecting Addis Ababa with the Lake regions and with Italian Somaliland, it is pointed out. At the same time a network of minor connecting roads will be built.

"The new roads will be bituminized and constructed with the technique necessary to take care of traffic in all seasons and for every purpose.

"A completely organized technical office of the Autonomous State Company of Roads is to be opened in Addis Ababa for immediate work, according to the report.

"As the roads are completed, road-keepers will be appointed for their protection and upkeep, the report states."

  
Lacey C. Zapf,  
Liaison Officer.

865D.154/3

REC'D 16 JUN 1936  
FBI

FP

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

4

SEE 865d.01/119 FOR #1733

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED June 10, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1197 •••

REGARDING: Roads in Ethiopia are asserted to be already adequate to guarantee communications during the rains. Project of a highway between Diredawa and Harrar is under consideration. The Government has also opened bids for bus lines.

88

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE ..... 865d.01/142 ..... FOR ..... Despatch #1756 .....

FROM ..... Italy ..... ( ..... Kirk ..... ) DATED ..... June 26, 1936 .....

NAME

1-1127

\*\*\*

REGARDING: Roads- Italian East Africa. The Massau- Macalle highway has been almost completely asphalted.

Roads.

The official Stefani Agency reports that the Massau- Macalle highway has been almost completely asphalted, and that the road from Macalle to Quoram has been greatly improved and satisfies the needs of traffic. It adds that work is now being done on the Quoram-Dessie road.

865D. 154/5

fp

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/149 FOR #1776

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED July 9, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 . . .

### REGARDING:

Improvement of the Addis Ababa-Dessie road, which is carrying a great deal of automobile traffic.

### Roads.

A large number of workers and soldiers of the ~~Engineer~~ Corps have been engaged in improving the Addis Ababa-Dessie road, which is carrying a great deal of automobile traffic. The road from Massaua through Macallé to Quoram is reported to be in excellent condition and can be covered in twenty-four hours. It is said that before the end of the year the road from Quoram to Addis Ababa will be improved, so that Massaua will be only two days from the capital.

865D-154/6

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

7

SEE 8654.01/154 FOR Despatch #1797

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED July 22, 1936.  
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Road construction in Ethiopia. 8,000 laborers arrived at Massaua on July 12, 1936, for under the Military Engineers. Officials of the Autonomous Organization for Road Construction in Ethiopia have left for East Africa and will be distributed at certain designated towns.

wth

865D • 154/7

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

8

SEE 884.6461 Tsana Dam/577 FOR letter

FROM J.G. White Engineering (Henry A. /) DATED July 28, 1936  
TO Corporation, New York City NAME 1-1287 ...  
Lardner

**REGARDING:** Road building in Ethiopia by the Italians.

Advises that a client who is interested in a rock asphalt quarry in Kentucky expects to receive a contract for road material from Italians, and assumes that it is for use in Ethiopia.

865D.154 / 0

lec

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/171 FOR Despatch #1889

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED Sept. 16, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 o.p.

REGARDING: Roads- Italian East Africa. Press report concerning opening of 530 kilometers of road in the Sidamo district.

### Roads.

The press reports that 530 kilometers of road have been opened in the Sidamo district, connecting Malesa Guba, Mega, Moyale, Igo, Dubuluk, Iavello, and Agheremariam. As soon as the rainy season ends, work will be begun on the road between Addis Ababa and Dessie.

865D • 154 / 6

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

To War, Navy  
+ Commerce  
10/27/36  
NE  
NE-MB 9/SC  
October 28 1936

EMB

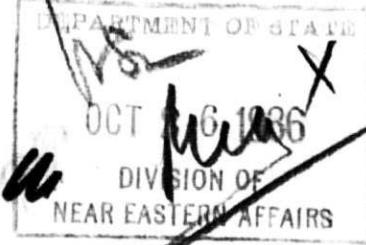


FROM

Addis Ababa

Dated October 24, 1936

Rec'd 6:55 a. m., 25th



Secretary of State,

Washington.

609, October 24, 4 p. m.

Italian Minister of Public Works now here signed yesterday contracts with Italian firms for the construction of highway from the port of Assab via Sardo to Dossio and Addis Ababa. Must be rendered practicable even in the rainy season by June 30, 1937 and completely finished by June, 1938.

ENGERT

RGC:EMB

001 29 1936

FILED

EMB

365D-154/10

In reply refer to  
ME 8650.154/10

October 28 1936

8650.154/10

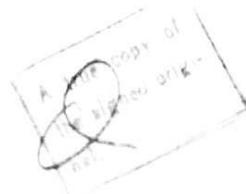
The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of War and transmits for the information of the War Department a copy of a telegram from the Minister Resident at Addis Ababa, dated October 24, 1936, regarding the signing of contracts for the construction of a road in Ethiopia.

Enclosure:

From Addis Ababa,  
Telegram No. 609,  
October 24, 4 p. m.

ME: MSG/CC

M.S.G



Oct 28 1936

W.H.M.

October 28 1936

In reply refer to  
ME 365D.154/10

The Secretary of State presents his compliments  
to the Honorable the Secretary of Commerce and transmits  
for the information of the Department of Commerce a copy  
of a telegram from the Minister Resident at Addis Ababa,  
dated October 24, 1936, regarding the signing of contracts  
for the construction of a road in Ethiopia.

365D.154/10

Enclosure:

From Addis Ababa,  
Telegram No. 609,  
October 24, 4 p. m.

ME: MRS/06

M.B.G.

MLW

✓  
for

62  
True copy  
John

In reply refer to  
EE 865D.154/10

October 28 1936

865D.154/10

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of the Navy and transmits for the information of the Navy Department a copy of a telegram from the Minister Resident at Addis Ababa, dated October 24, 1936, regarding the signing of contracts for the construction of a road in Ethiopia.

Enclosure:

From Addis Ababa,  
Telegram No. 609,  
October 24, 4 p. m.

EE: MDC/CC

M.B.G.

609 28 Oct 1936

*[Signature]*  
John

## ISSUED BY THE INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, OFFICE OF CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, NAVY DEPARTMENT

## ATTACHE'S REPORT

Forward seven copies (original and six carbons); this number is necessary because of the limited personnel in O. N. I. and because of the urgency for quickly disseminating information from attachés. These copies will be distributed by O. N. I. as per footnote or elsewhere, according to subject matter.

From **T** Date **16 October, 1936** Serial No. **572** File No. **105  
502-700**  
(Select proper number from O. N. I. Index)

Source of information **Official**

Subject **ITALY** **COLONIES** **ROADS** **EUROPEAN** **AFRICA** **ASIA**  
(Nation reported on) (Index title as per index sheet) (Subtitle)

Reference

RECEIVED **RECEIVED** BRIEF, PRELIMINARY review, indexing, and distribution of reports by O. N. I. will be greatly expedited if a brief summary of the contents is entered in the report. Mention leading geographical, personal, or political names, and the gist of the report.

NOV 5 1936

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

ROAD BUILDING IN ITALIAN EAST AFRICA.

1936  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1. The following program of road building in Italian East Africa has been announced for immediate execution and it is expected that these roads will be completed within two years:

Omanger - Gondar - Debra Tabor	650 kilometers
Debra Tabor - Debra Marcus - Addis Abeba	650 "
Adigrat - Dessie - Addis Abeba	500 "
Dessie - Assab	500 "
Addis Abeba - Gimma	500 "

Later a trunk road Addis Abeba - Allata - Neghelli - Dolo, 1100 "

This makes a total of 2,800 kilometers of road to be built in the immediate future.

2. In connection with this program it is noted that the motor road from Assab to Dessie will be in direct competition with the French railroad to Gibuti.

865D • 154/11

5-1

NOV 5 - 1936

FILED

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/224

FOR Despatch #105

FROM Italy ( Phillips ) DATED Dec. 2, 1936  
TO  NAME 1-1127 sp

REGARDING: Roads- Italian East Africa. According to a news despatch from Addis Ababa, there are more than 100,000 tons of merchandise at Djibouti awaiting transportation into Ethiopia. Most of it is said to be construction material.

865D. 154 / 12

WE KFC

fp

According to a news despatch from Addis Ababa, there are more than 100,000 tons of merchandise at Djibouti awaiting transportation into Ethiopia. Most of it is said to be construction material, but there are included such items as 1,000 tons of furniture, 200 tons of radios and phonographs, 10 tons of tobacco and 50 tons of Christmas specialities for Italians. At the rate of shipment on the Djibouti railway before the Italian occupation, it would take more than two years to move this merchandise. Although the railway is now carrying much more than formerly, the problem of transportation is said to be serious. The Italian authorities have therefore put a large number of laborers to work on the road which follows the railway from Djibouti to Moggio. This road will be extended to Dira Dawa and serve for the transportation of a large amount of merchandise by motor trucks.

amount

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

To Commerc  
1/18/37  
NE-MB-S/SC  
January 19 1937  
WE  
WE

MED

This telegram must be **FROM** ADDIS ABABA  
closely paraphrased  
before being communicated to anyone (a)

Dated January 14, 1937

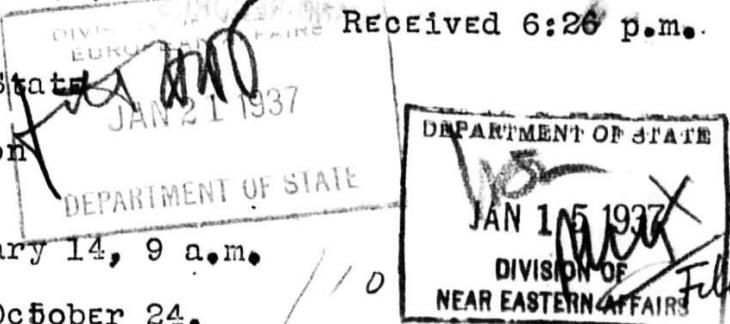
Received 6:26 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

13, January 14, 9 a.m.

My 609, October 24.



I am told that in the neighborhood of three billion lire will be spent on road construction in Italian East Africa within the next few years.

ENGERT

SMS:NPL

JAN 22 1937

FILED

GC

865D • 154/13

January 19 1937

In reply refer to  
ME 865D.154/13

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of Commerce and quotes below for the information of the Department of Commerce a paraphrase of a telegram from the Minister Resident at Addis Ababa, dated January 14, 1937, regarding the building of roads in Italian East Africa:

"It is reported that about three billion lire will be spent within the next few years on building roads in Italian East Africa."

ME MSG/CO

MSG

865D.154/13

11  
P

Jan 20  
bpa



John

8652, 154

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE ..... 865d.01/237 ..... FOR ..... #132

FROM Italy ( Phillips ) DATED Dec. 22, 1936  
TO NAME 1-1127 G.P.O.

REGARDING: Inspection trip of Minister of Public Works into Italian East Africa. Expressed satisfaction over the public works completed.

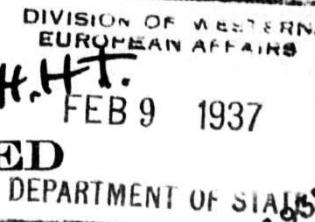
mb

865D. 154/ 14

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14

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED



JS

This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone (A)

FROM ADDIS ABABA

Dated February 5, 1937

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC ADVISER

FEB 11 1937

Rec'd 6:30 p.m. *HC*

Secretary of State

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C.

37, February 5, 3 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FEB 6 1937

DIVISION OF  
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

*FEB-1937* BG.

As a result of recently concluded arrangement  
between Great Britain and Italy a company is said to  
have been formed with British and Italian capital for  
the exploitation of road transportation from Berbera and  
Zeilla to Harrar.

ENGERT

EMB:S.MS:JS

FEB 13 1937

FILED

GMB

3650 • 154/15

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

A.C/C

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE  
FEB 11 1937

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM FROM ADDIS ABABA  
NO. 87. FEBRUARY 5, 5 P. M.

It is reported that, as a consequence of the arrangement recently concluded between Great Britain and Italy, there has been formed a company which will employ both British and Italian capital in the development of road transportation from Harrar to the ports of Zeila and Berbera.

865D.154/15

February 8 1937

In reply refer to  
NE 865D.154/15

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of Commerce and transmits for the information of the Department of Commerce a paraphrase of a telegram from the Minister Resident at Addis Ababa, dated February 5, 1937, regarding cooperation between British and Italian capital in the development of road transportation to Harrar in Ethiopia.

Enclosure:

Paraphrase of telegram  
from Addis Ababa, February 5, 1937.

FEB 8 1937  
J

NE MBG/EG  
2/6/37

MBG.

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865D.154/15

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

NE  
FILE  
DIVISION OF WESTERN  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

FEB 12 1937

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ADDIS ABABA

CA

This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (A)

FROM

Dated Feb. 11, 1937.

Recd 10:25 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

43, February 11, 4 p.m.

Legation's 37, February 6, 3 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL

In conversation with an Italian official I inquired whether any similar agreements had been reached with the French Government regarding road transit via Djibouti. He replied in the negative and said that although the Italian Government had repeatedly made overtures the French had so far shown no desire to cooperate. He thought the Blum Government was making a great mistake not to come to terms with Italy for the latter would soon be in a position to ~~strangle~~ Djibouti.

FILED  
FEB 15 1937

ENGRRT

SMS NPL

GMB

365D.154/16

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 741.65/329 FOR Despatch #194

FROM Italy ( Kirk ) DATED Feb. 4, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127 ofo

REGARDING: Roads- Italian East Africa. The Italian Government will construct roads to the Somaliland frontier and establish a truck service from Harrar to the sea coast, which will take care of a large portion of future imports and exports.

3650 • 154/17

fp

The second accord will guarantee freedom of transit to goods destined for the Italian hinterland which will be sent by truck across British Somaliland from Zeila and Berbera. The Djibouti Railroad is insufficient to take care of the volume of traffic required for the development of Ethiopia. It is reliably estimated that approximately 52,000 tons of merchandise are piled on the docks at Djibouti awaiting transportation. The facilities of the railroad are so limited that such congestion is inescapable and other means must be found to ship goods to the interior. It is therefore proposed to develop the two British ports to take care of Italian trade and to put in order the truck roads leading from these ports to Ethiopian territory. The Italian Government, for its part, will construct roads to the Somaliland frontier and establish a truck service from Harrar to the sea coast, which will take care of a large portion of future imports and exports, thus helping to reduce transportation costs. It is understood that these plans call for a daily service of nearly 100 two-ton trucks. It is reported, incidentally, that this will mean large purchases abroad by

the..

- 3 -

the Italian Government of trucks of this size, as few are manufactured in Italy suitable for the purpose.

To fulfill this project will mean active cooperation between Great Britain and Italy in the colonial field and, as pointed out by Italian press commentors, represents concrete evidence of the improved relations between Great Britain and Italy.

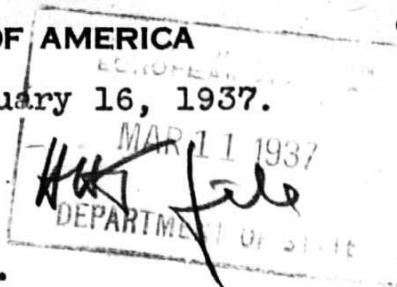


4606

LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Addis Ababa, January 16, 1937.

No. 227



Subject: Motor Transport Services.

FOR GUARDED  
DISSEMINATION ONLY.

1937 MAR 3 PM 3 42

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
1937 MAR 3 PM 3 42  
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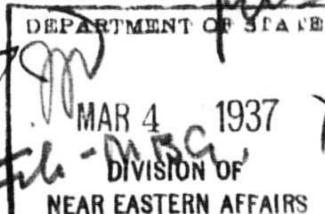
MAR 9 - 1937

Copy to the Italian  
Commercial Office (A-C/O)

To

Rome

3/8/37



The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that since the beginning of January, 1937, serious efforts have been made by the Italian authorities to establish regular motor transport services over the existing main roads in Ethiopia.

The principal object is to remedy the present congestion on the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway which is getting worse every day [see Legation's telegram No. 664, December 2, 1936], and also to avoid having to purchase

French

1937 MAR 11

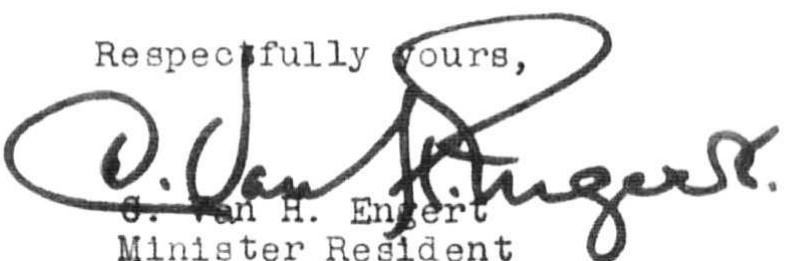
French exchange in order to pay for the heavy freight charges which at the Djibouti end must be paid in francs.

In addition to much military transport, commercial trucks have begun to operate at more or less regular intervals between Asmara and Addis Ababa. The journey in either direction still takes a minimum of about a week and may take as much as three weeks. However, a motorbus service has recently been started which aims at covering the distance in four days. At present these busses run three times a week, but later it is intended to have a daily service. It is also planned to establish a bus service from Asmara to Gondar.

Feverish activity is being displayed on a motor road which is ultimately to link Addis Ababa with Djibouti as this would most directly and immediately relieve the railroad. Although a dirt track, passable for automobiles in the dry season, already exists, there is little likelihood that it can be rendered practicable for heavy traffic in time for the next rainy season.

It is interesting and significant in this connection that whenever Italians refer to the proposed network of roads for Ethiopia they usually state that preference would be given to motor vehicles of Italian origin and that those of foreign manufacture are to be limited to the minimum possible.

Respectfully yours,

  
G. Van H. Engert  
Minister Resident

File No. 824.1/879.7

CVHE/rlh

Copy for Embassy, Rome.

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/262 FOR Despatch #233

FROM Italy ( Phillips ) DATED Feb. 24, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127 o.p.s

REGARDING:

Roads- Italian East Africa. Report in the press that the highway between Asmara and Addis Ababa will be completed before the next rainy season.

fp

865d. 154/19

EWL  
14

## Communications.

The press reports that the highway between Asmara and Addis Ababa will be completed before the next rainy season. 21,800 Italians and 8,450 natives are said to be engaged in its construction.

The *MESSAGGERO* of February 22nd states that, as a result of measures adopted by Italy, in accord with France, the congestion of goods for Ethiopia lying at Djibouti (Embassy's despatch No. 105 of December 2, 1936) is being rapidly relieved. It adds that the 32,000 tons of merchandise in the port on February 18th were reduced to 25,000 in only three days. It states that transportation will be hastened as follows:

1. Forwarding part of such merchandise intended for Upper Ugaden and Harrar, through Zeila and Berbera;
2. Transporting goods by truck on the road which runs alongside the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway.

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE ..... 865d.01/290 ..... FOR ..... Despatch #383

FROM ..... Italy ..... ( Phillips ) DATED May 28, 1937

TO ..... NAME ..... 1-1127 670

REGARDING: Road building program- Italian East Africa.

1. Roads. The road building program includes the construction of main arteries and secondary roads. The main arteries will consist of an elaboration of the present Roads Administration plan and will extend throughout the territory as far as the southern and western boundaries.

The secondary road net will form part of the building program of each individual government.

Tracks and caravan routes, to satisfy the exigencies of local native traffic, will also be opened up.

2. |

GML

865D. 154 / 20

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE ..... 865d.01/292 ..... FOR Despatch #432

FROM ..... Italy ..... ( Phillips ) DATED ..... June 17, 1937 .....  
TO ..... NAME ..... 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Roads- Italian East Africa. Return to Rome of Italian Minister for Public Works after an inspection trip in Italian East Africa when he gave a report to the Duce on the progress of road building in Ethiopia.

865D • 154421

fp

GE

Roads.

The Italian Minister for Public Works, Signor Cobolli-Gigli, after an inspection trip of several months in Italian East Africa, returned to Rome on June 1st. On the third he was received by the Duce, to whom he gave a report on the progress of road-building in Ethiopia. According to an official communiqué, the Duce highly praised the work accomplished by the Minister and his assistants. Signor Cobolli-Gigli, in an interview with the press, stated that on May 1st there were 56,550 Italians and 84,000 Ethiopians engaged in road building in the conquered territory. He went on to say that 9,300,000 cubic meters had been excavated, 4,700,000 cubic meters had been filled in, and 446,000 cubic meters of masonry had been constructed. The roads which had been ballasted and gravelled covered an area of 9,700,000 square meters. He added that on June 30th, before the commencement of the heavy rains, 1,000 kilometers of road would be asphalted, 1,300 kilometers ballasted and gravelled, and 1,200 kilometers in a state of advanced progress. The Minister declared this would include an asphalted road from Massaua through Asmara and Decameré up to Amba Alagi and the fork of the road to Gondar, a little beyond Axum; and small roads from Addis Ababa to Addis Alem and from Addis Ababa to Gimma, as well as ballasted roads open to traffic, from Axum to Gondar and from Amba Alagi through Dessié to Addis Ababa. In addition, a ninety-kilometer trail had been constructed beyond Macfud up to Debra Breban to ensure traffic during the rainy season. During the following year, he asserted, roads would be opened to traffic between Assab and Batié, Addis Ababa and Lekemti, beyond Addis Alem, and between

MILITARY ATTACHE

American Embassy

ROME, ITALY

6-2 Report

SI. E  
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JUL 5 1937

COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

NO OBJECTION TO PUBLICATION  
IN SERVICE JOURNALS.

COPY FURNISHED  
THE AMERICAN EMBASSY  
Rome, Italy.

6. 3

REF ID: A627  
DEPT OF STATE  
MIL. INTEL.

2504-93  
4600

5  
WAR DEPARTMENT

ITALY (ECONOMIC)

Subject : Roads - General.

*SDU. 154*  
The Road Net of East Africa.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

See JUL 9 1937

RE

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.01/293 FOR # 446

FROM Italy ( Phillips ) DATED June 24, 1937.  
TO NAME 1-1137 SPO

REGARDING: Italian East African appropriation for road work.

Comments with regard to -



Office of the Comptroller  
OCT 28 1937  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

No. 592

THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Map filed in  
HA-Cread as:

563.6mb

1937U

(Profile sheet &  
Index pamphlet  
included)

19890

AMERICAN EMBASSY

ROME, October 2, 1937.

Subject: Road Construction in Ethiopia.

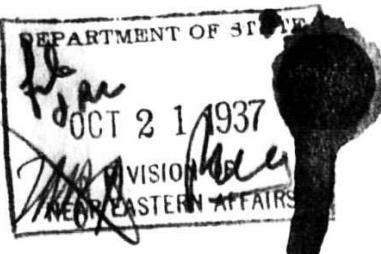
HISTORICAL ADVISER

OCT 28 1937

DEPT. OF STATE

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RECORDING DESK  
FILE - WHB  
1957

COMMUNICATIONS  
AND RECORDS



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Honorable

A. M. C. [Signature]

OCT 21 1937

The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE

Sig

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF  
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS  
PUBLICATIONS SECTION

OCT 20 1937

OCT 25 1937

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DEC 3 1937  
RECEIVED

I have the honor to enclose as of possible interest  
1/. 2/. to the Department a map, a table and various photographs  
3/. pertaining to road-construction in Ethiopia for the period  
from December, 1936 to June 30, 1937.

The figures are those used by an Italian engineer,  
Giuseppe Pini, in an article which has appeared in the  
August 1937 issue of the ECONOMIC REVIEW OF ITALIAN  
AFRICA (RASSEGNA ECONOMICA DELL'AFRICA ITALIANA). Mr.  
Pini estimates that the cost of construction of the  
roads projected will average about 950,000 lire per  
kilometer or \$80,000 per mile.

The Addis Ababa-Gimma highway as projected will be  
353 kilometers long, of which 70 kilometers were completed

and...

865D.154/24

and open to traffic on June 30, 1937. This highway is 9 meters wide, of which 7 meters are paved; its maximum grade is 6% and minimum curve radius, 30 meters.

The Addis Ababa - Asmara highway as projected will be 1,110 kilometers long; on June 30, 1937, 835 kilometers were completed and opened to the public. From Asmara to Allomata (500 kilometers), the road is 8 meters wide, of which 6 meters are paved. Its maximum grade is 8% and the minimum curve radius is 12 meters, whereas the 610 kilometers from Allomata to Addis Ababa is 9 meters wide, of which 7 meters are paved; the maximum grade is 6% and the minimum curve radius, 30 meters.

The Asmara-Gondar Road, which as projected will cover 580 kilometers, has a length of 446 kilometers which have been open to the public since June 30, 1937. From Asmara to Debarek (475 kilometers), the road is 8 meters wide, of which 6 meters are paved. Its maximum grade is 8% and the minimum curve radius is 12 meters, whereas the 105 kilometers from Debarek to Gondar is 9 meters wide, of which 6 meters are paved; the maximum grade on this sector is 6%, with a minimum curve radius of 30 meters.

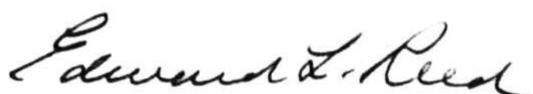
The Assab-Dessie highway as projected will be 530 kilometers long; on June 30, 1937, 200 kilometers were under construction. This highway is 9 meters wide, of which 7 meters are paved; its maximum grade is 6% and the minimum curve radius is 30 meters.

The Addis Ababa-Lekemti highway as projected will be 344 kilometers long, of which 90 kilometers were completed and opened to traffic on June 30, 1937. This road is 9 meters wide, 7 meters of which are paved; its maximum grade is 6% with minimum curve radius of 30 meters.

The Asmara-Barentu-Sabderat highway as projected will be 385 kilometers long, of which 120 kilometers were completed and open to traffic on June 30, 1937. This road is 8 meters wide, of which 6 meters are paved; its maximum grade is 8% and the minimum curve radius is 12 meters.

The above main routes are indicated in heavy blue crayon on the enclosed map. Broken blue lines show incompletely completed portions of projected routes. A sheet is attached to the map showing cross section drawings of the same roads, giving elevation and depression thereof, as well as kilometer readings.

Respectfully yours,



Edward L. Reed,  
Chargeé d'Affaires ad interim.

Enclosures:

1. Map.
2. Table of Roads.
3. Illustrations.

RGM/wrm.  
815,4.

Contracted  
New Construction

Asmara-Addis Ababa.....	km. 1,110
Asmara-Gondar.....	" 580
Dessié-Assab.....	" 530
Dessié-Gondar.....	" 57
Asmara-Agordat-Sabderat.....	" 385
Addis Ababa-Gimma.....	" 353
Addis Ababa-Lekemti.....	" 344
Total.....	km. 3,359

Resurfaced

Massaua-Asmara.....	km. 116
Nefasit-Decamere.....	" 39
Total.....	km. 155

Projected Works.

Important Bridges.....	205
Small bridges.....	8,149
Excavations (cm.earth).....	15,600,000
Banking and leveling (cm.earth).....	12,200,000
Brick and concrete Work (cm.).....	1,410,000
Paving (sq.m.).....	19,600,000
Plastering.....	18,631,000

MAIN EMPIRE ROADS (Assembled Data).

Under Construction or Completed

Work commenced between Dec.1936 and June 30, 1937

Length of newly constructed highways open

	<u>To Traffic</u>	
Asmara-Addis Ababa.....	km. 835	
Asmara-Gondar.....	" 446	
Dessié-Assab.....	" --- country road	
Dessié-Gondar.....	" --- work in progress	
Asmara-Tessenei-Sabderat.....	" 120	
Addis Ababa-Gimma.....	" 45	
Addis Ababa-Lekemti.....	" 90	
		Km.1,536

(Work in progress on remaining roads, and resurfacing on the  
Massaua-Asmara and Nefasit-Decamere Highways.)

Work completed

Important bridges.....	114
Small bridges.....	3,810
Excavations (cm.earth).....	9,300,000
Banking & leveling (cm.earth).....	4,700,000
Brick and concrete work (cm.).....	635,000
Paving, sq. m....	9,700,000
Plastering, sq.m. 2,040,500	

Workshops

453 with floor area of 4,100,000 sq.m. including 285 brick factories, 1,305 barraché, with an area of 196,000 sq.m.
---

Men employed

Italian, working days.....	11,228,000
Natives " " .....	7,863,000

Machines

Rail line -300 km; Rail cars -2,428; Locomotives-30; Compression motors-220; Stone crushers -424; Rollers-244; Concrete mixers-77; Plastering machines-128; Autocars-1,803.
---

Basic Materials

Cement-quintals 544,500; Stone cubic meters-2,785,000; Iron-quintals 53,350; Dynamite-quintals 6,770.
---

Enclosure No. 3 to despatch No. 592 of October 2, 1937,  
from American Embassy, ROME.

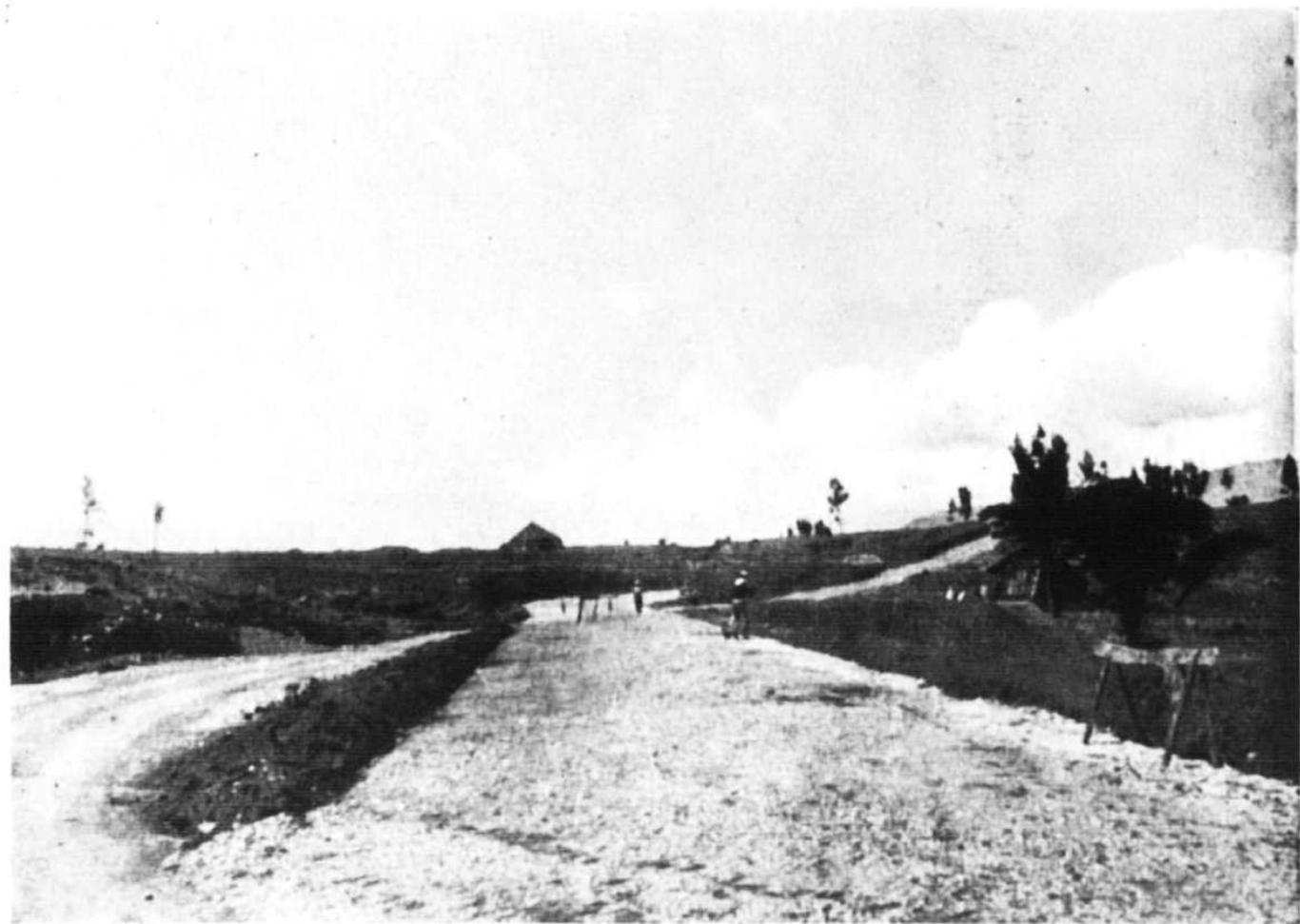
I L L U S T R A T I O N S

865d. 154/24

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - GIMMA



IL 1° CANTIERE



STRADA E PISTA AL KM. 7

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - GIMMA



CANTIERE AL KM. 24



L'ANDAMENTO DELLA STRADA AL KM. 38

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA



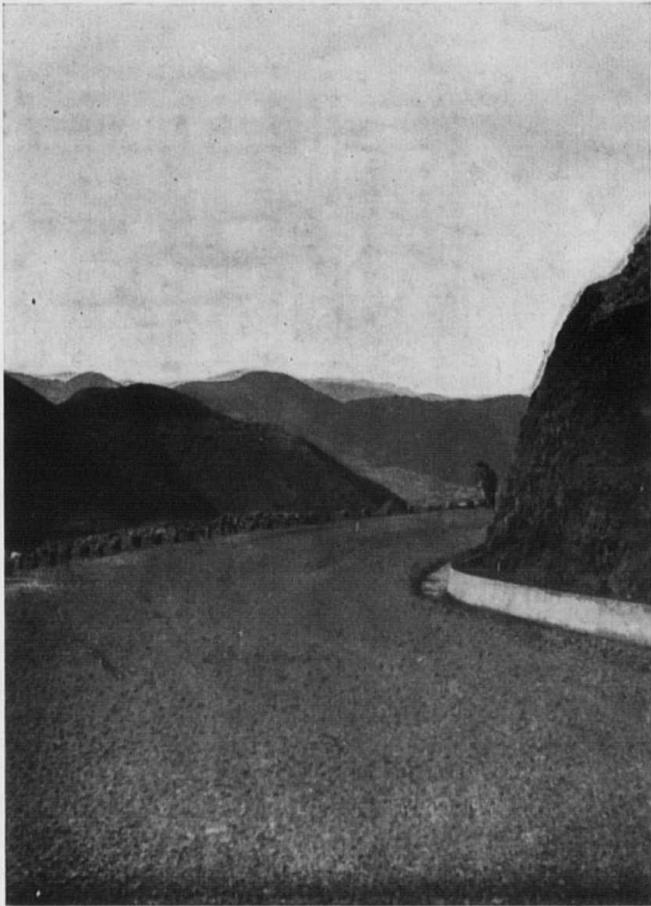
L'ULTIMO TRATTO DELLA DISCESA DA DESSIÈ A COMBOLCIÀ



SALUTO AL DUCE

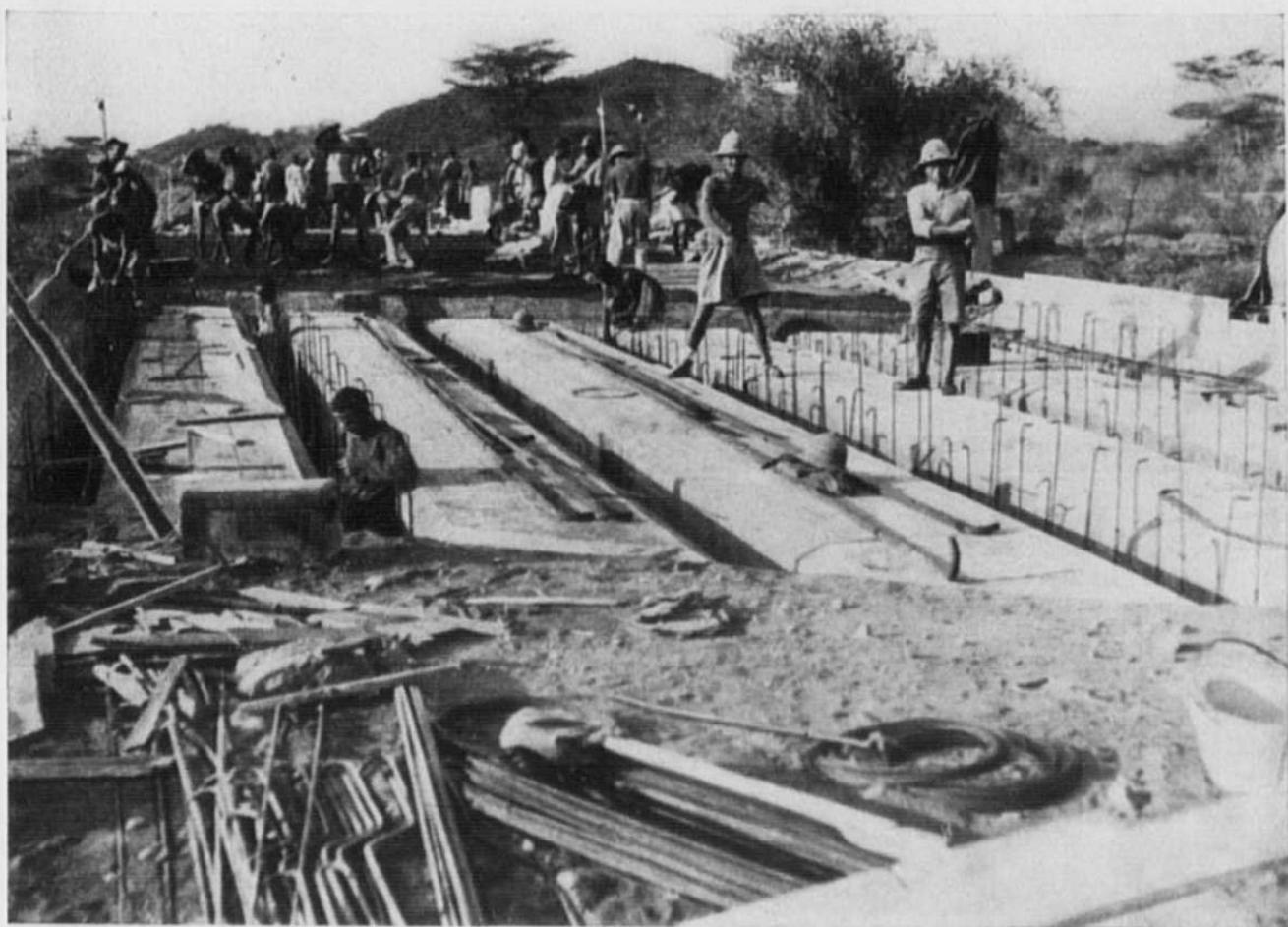


PONTE AD 1 ARCATA DI M. 15 SUL MILLÈ SUPERIORE  
IL VOLTO IN COSTRUZIONE



DA DESSIÈ A COMBOLCIÀ (STRADA BITUMATA)

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA



PONTE SULL'AROSCIÀ - GETTO DELLE TRAVATE

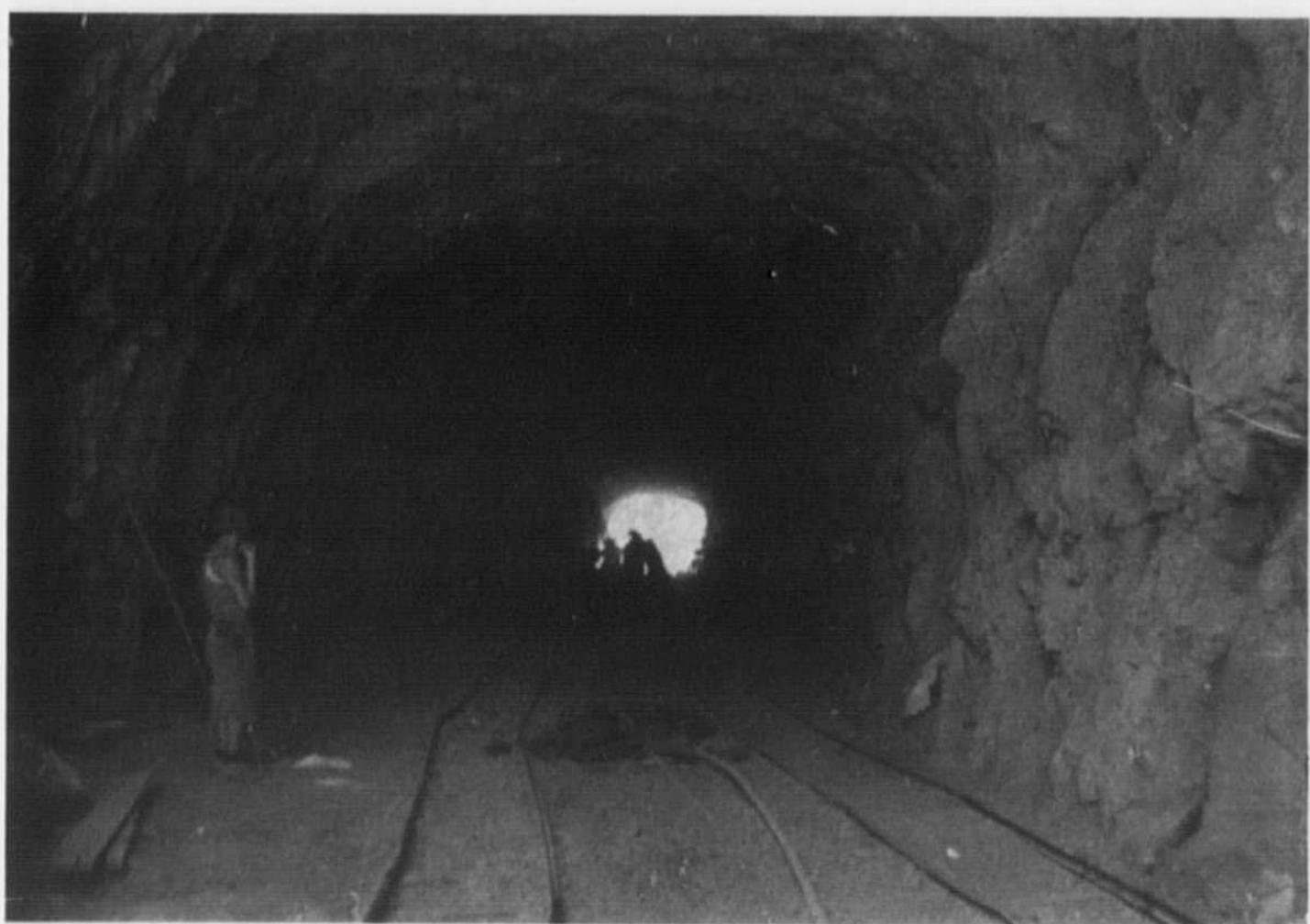


PONTE AD 1 ARCATA DI M. 15 SULL'ABATÌ

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA



DISCESA VERSO ALOMATÀ



GALLERIA DEL MAI AMARA (M. 148) - INTERNO

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA

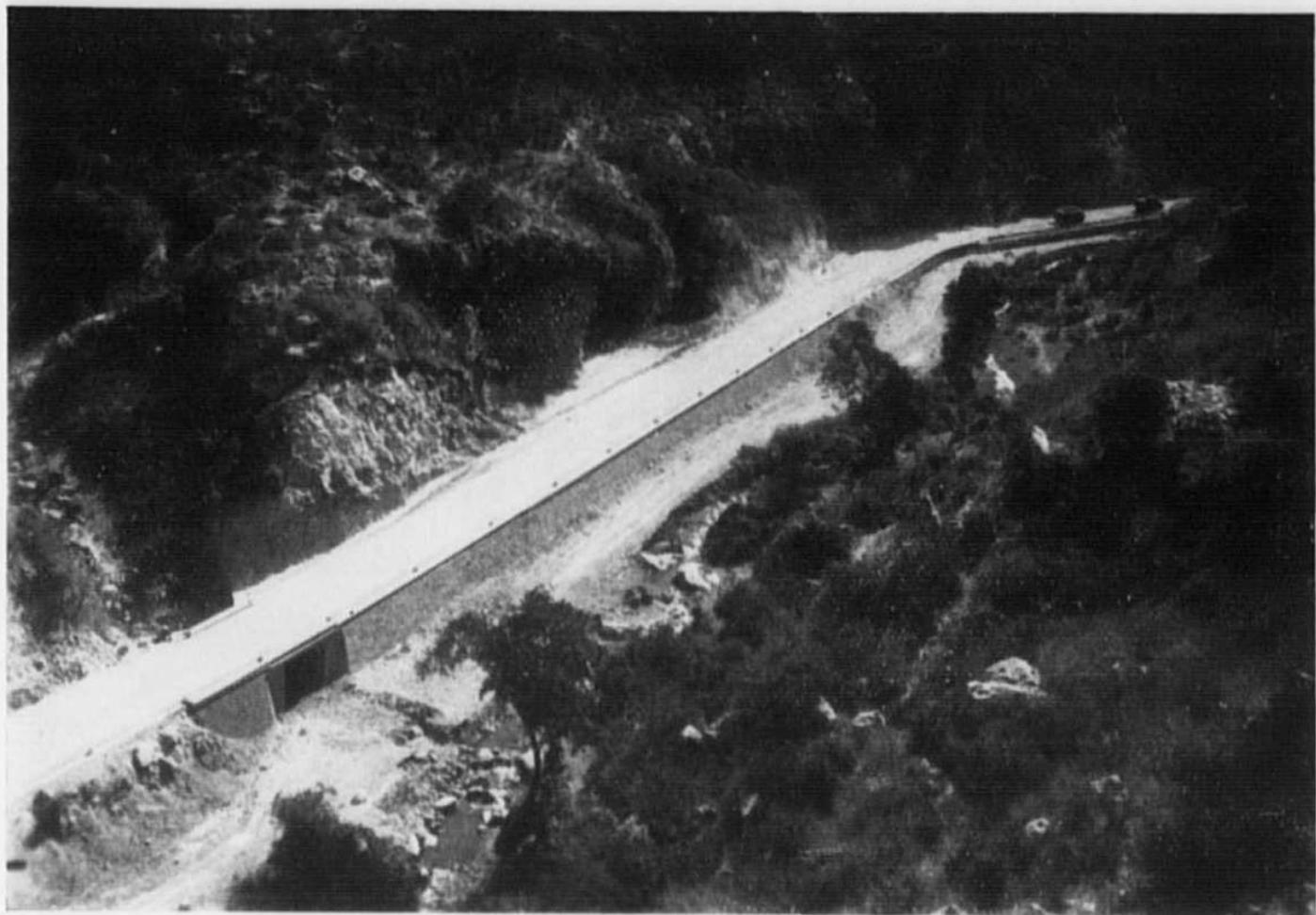


PONTE A 3 ARCADE DI M. 15 SUL GOLIMÀ - APERTURA AL TRANSITO



PONTE A 5 TRAVATE DI M. 6 PRESSO PASSO VOIRÀ

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA

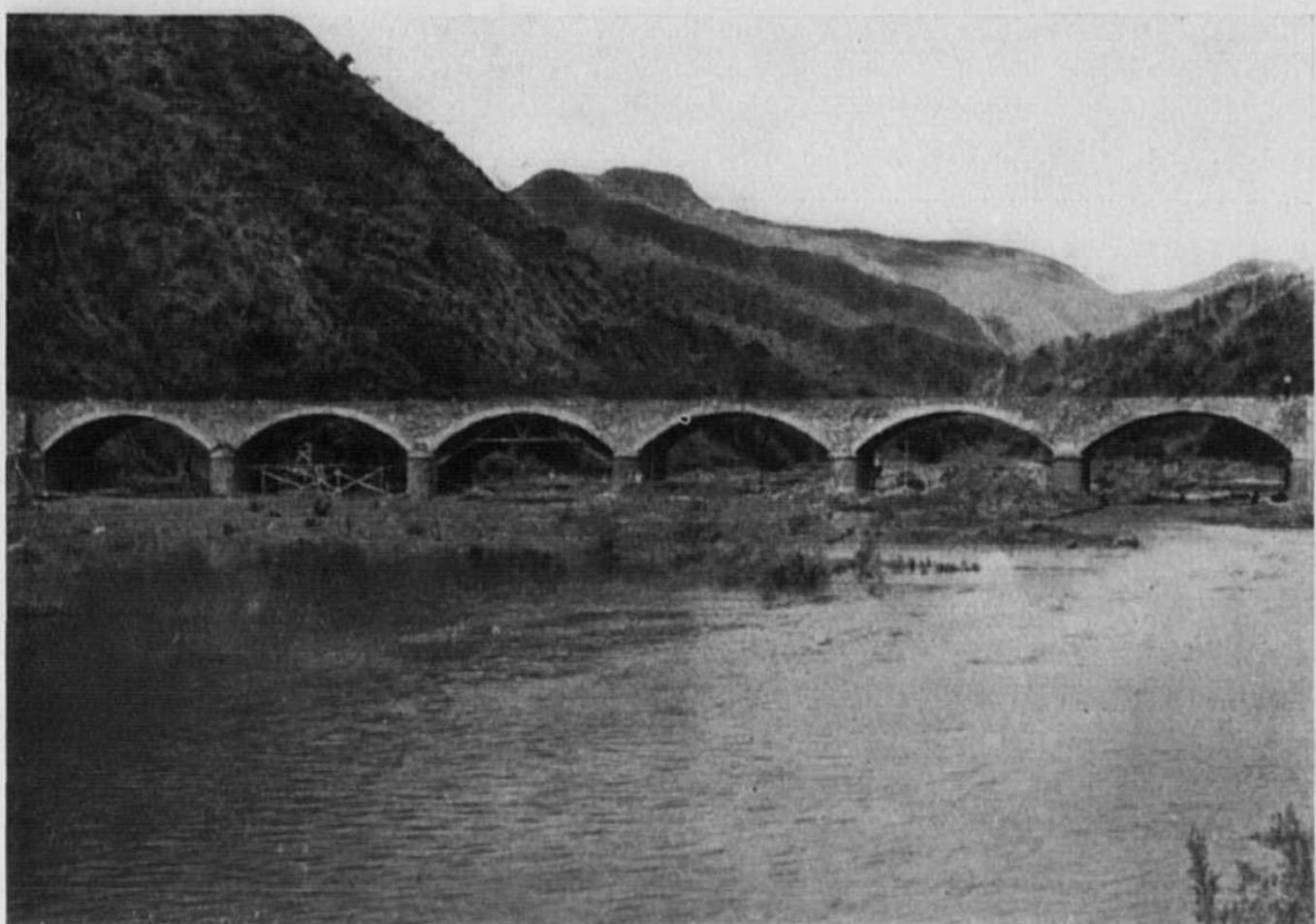


STRETTA DI MAI MESCIC



SALITA A PASSO ALAGI

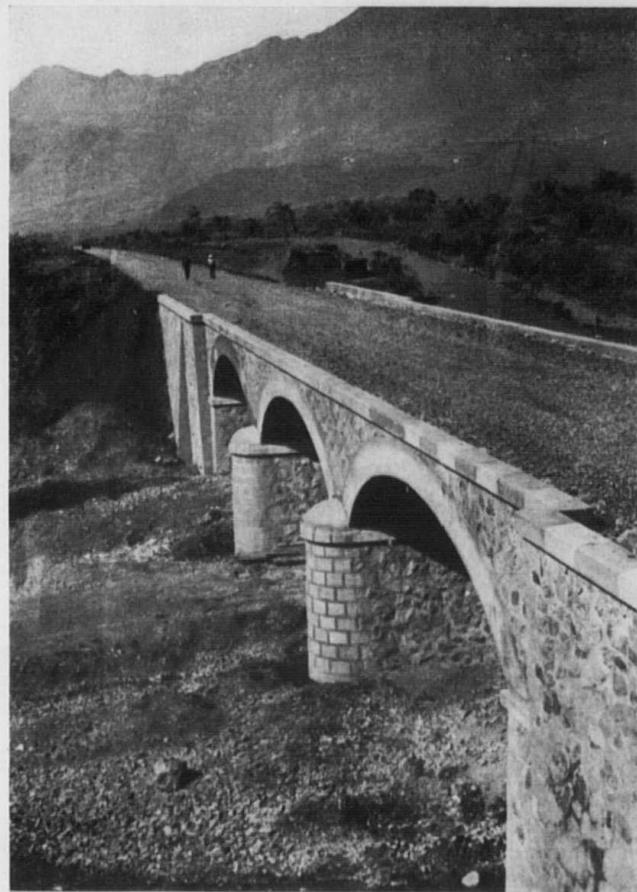
STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA



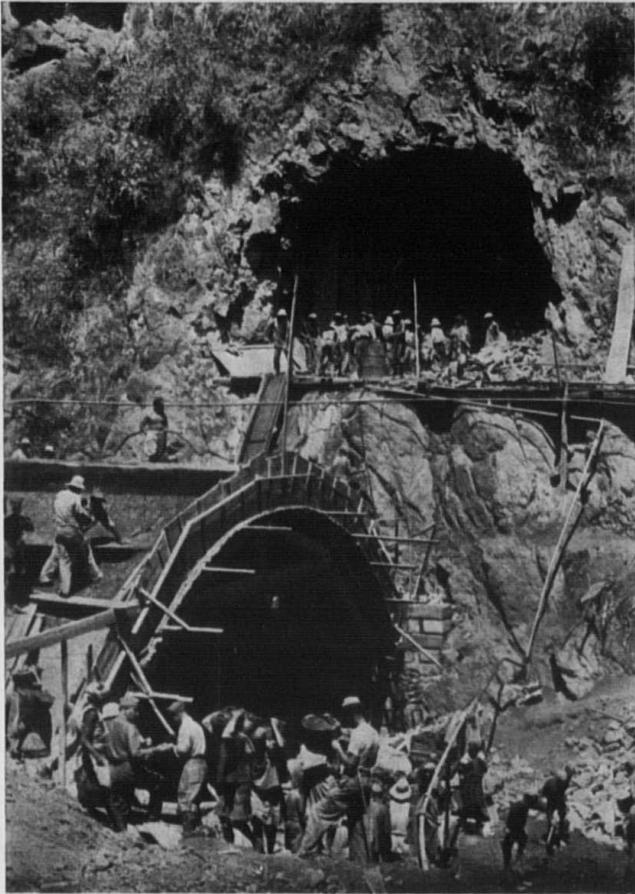
PONTE A 6 ARCATE DI M. 15 SULL'ALLÀ



PONTE AD 1 ARCATA DI M. 20 SUL SIRINKÀ



PONTE A 3 ARCADE DI M. 10 SULL'AGICÀ



GALLERIA DI MAI AMARA (M. 148) IMBOCCO ASMARA  
E PONTE AD 1 ARCADE DI M. 13 IN GETTO

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA



CANTONIERA DI ADI CAHIÈ



DA GOROMODÒ A PASSO NEGASC

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - ASMARA

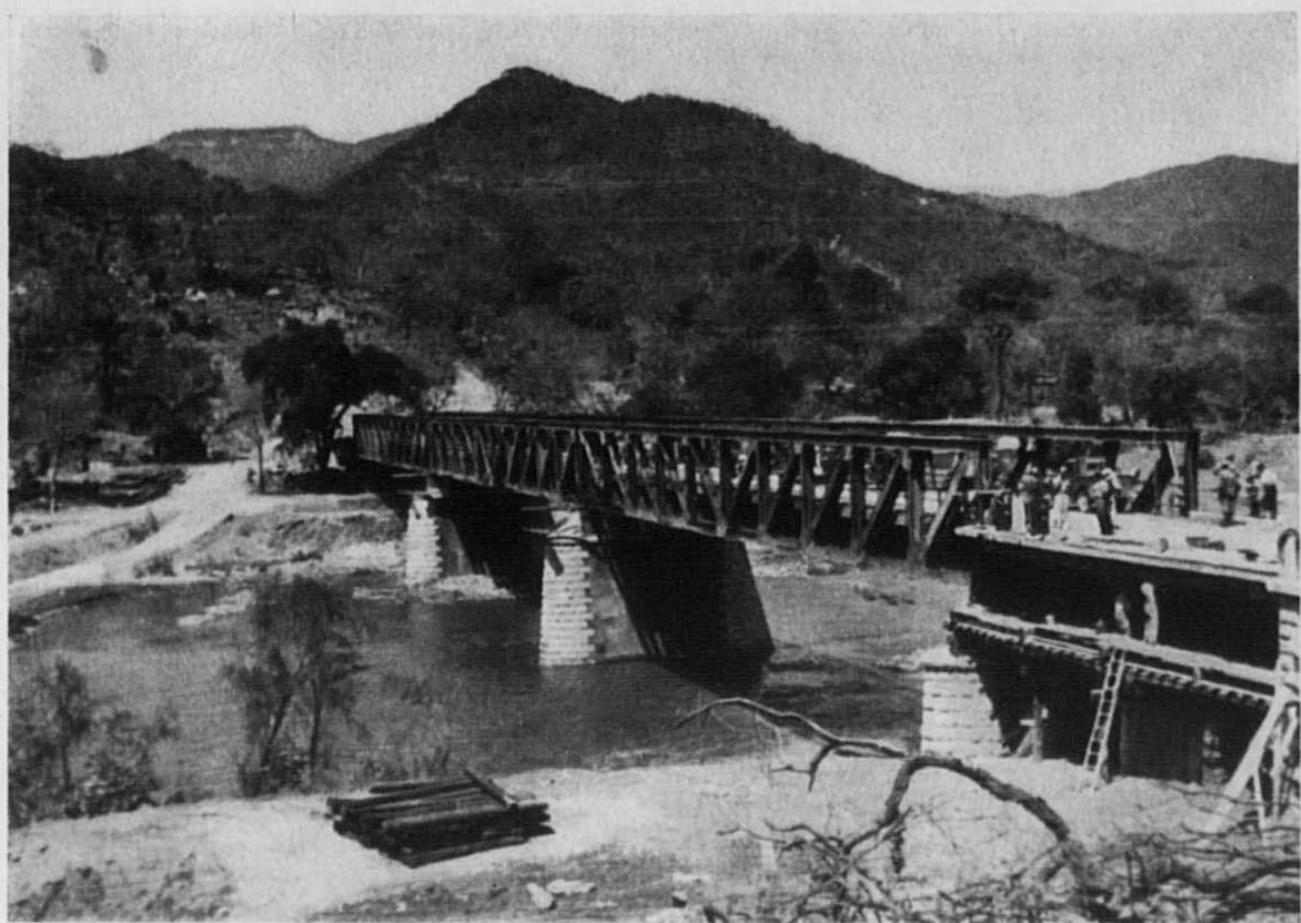


PRIMA DELL'INGRESSO IN DESSIÈ



GRANDE TORNANTE SUL TRATTO DA DESSIÈ A COMBOLCIÀ

STRADA ASMARA - GONDAR



PONTE SUL TACAZZÈ VEDUTO DI SCORCIO



I TORNANTI PER SALIRE ALL'ISTMO DI DEBIVAR

STRADA ASMARA - GONDAR

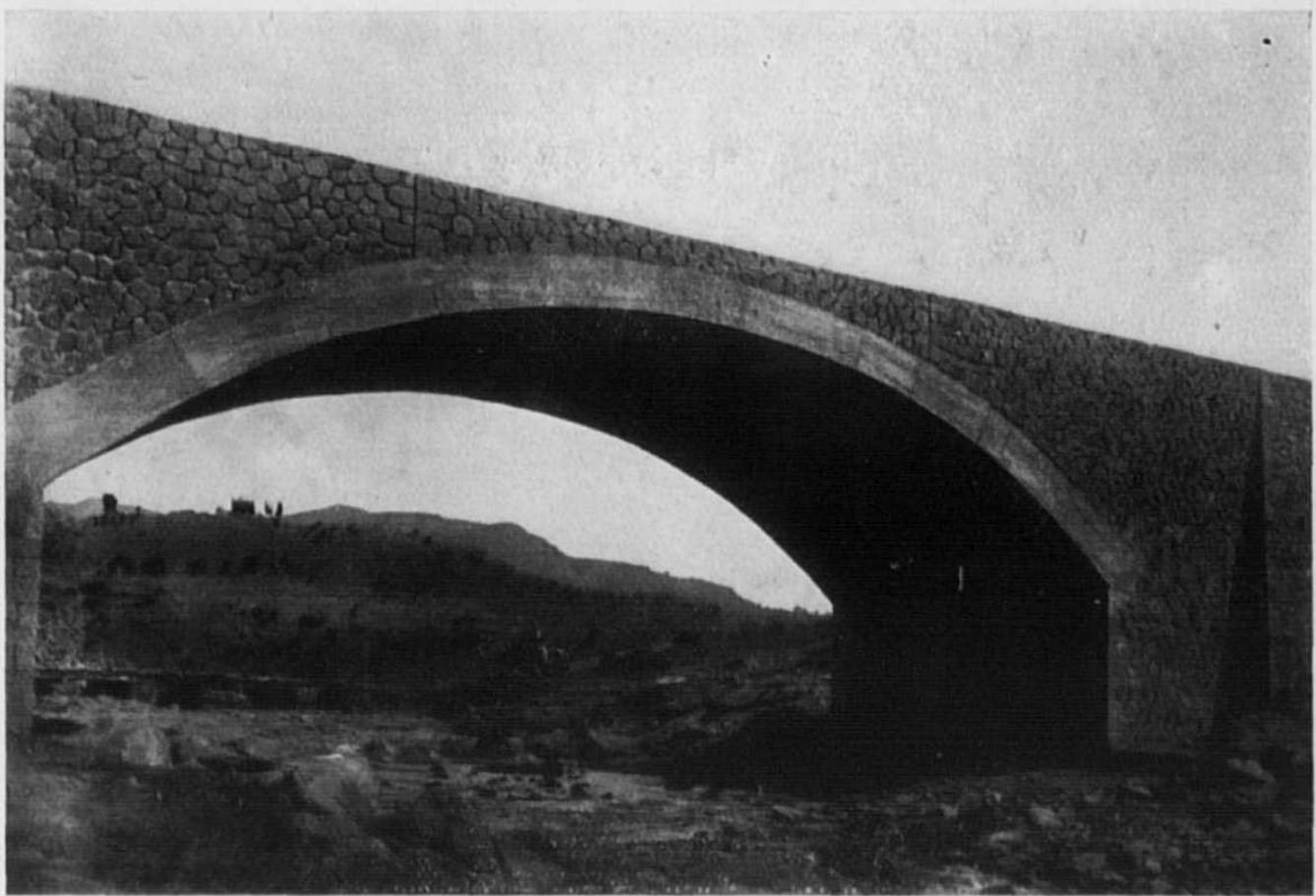


SALITA VERSO DARÒ TACLÈ



PONTE A 3 ARCATE PRESSO DARÒ TACLÈ

STRADA ASMARA - GONDAR



PONTE SULL'ANGAREB DI LUCE M. 20.



SALUTO DEI SUDANESE AL GRIDO: DUCIA DUCIA DUCIA!

STRADA ASMARA - GONDAR

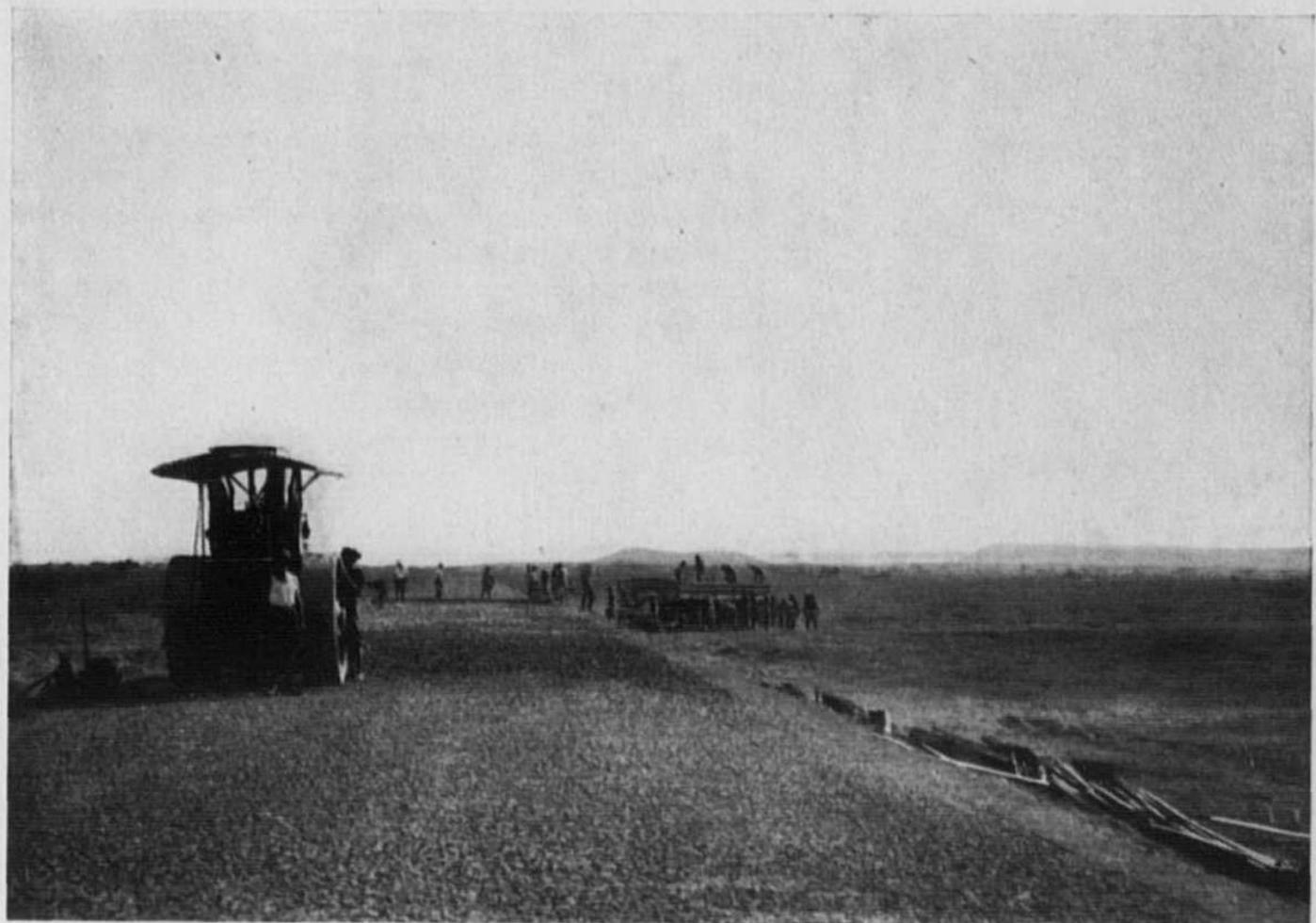


LA STRADA SULLA PARETE DELL'ISTMO DI DEBIVAR  
DOPO L'ISTMO È IL CIGLIONE DI UOLCHEFIT



SU UN TORNANTE PRIMA DELLA PARETE UOLCHEFIT  
SALUTO AL DUCE

STRADA ASSAB - DESSIÈ



LA RULLATURA AL KM. 4



FORMAZIONE DELLA SEDE STRADALE ALLA BASE DI UN ROCCIONE

STRADA ASSAB - DESSIE



LA STRADA BITUMINATA ALL'USCITA DI ASSAB



LA BITUMATURA AL KM. 3

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - LEKEMTI



RETTILINEO AL KM. 3



TRATTO AL KM. 7. - A SINISTRA CIMITERO COOPT, A DESTRA CIMITERO EUROPEO

STRADA ADDIS ABEBA - LEKEMTI



NASTRO STRADALE AL KM. 25



IMPIANTO PRODUZIONE GRANIGLIA

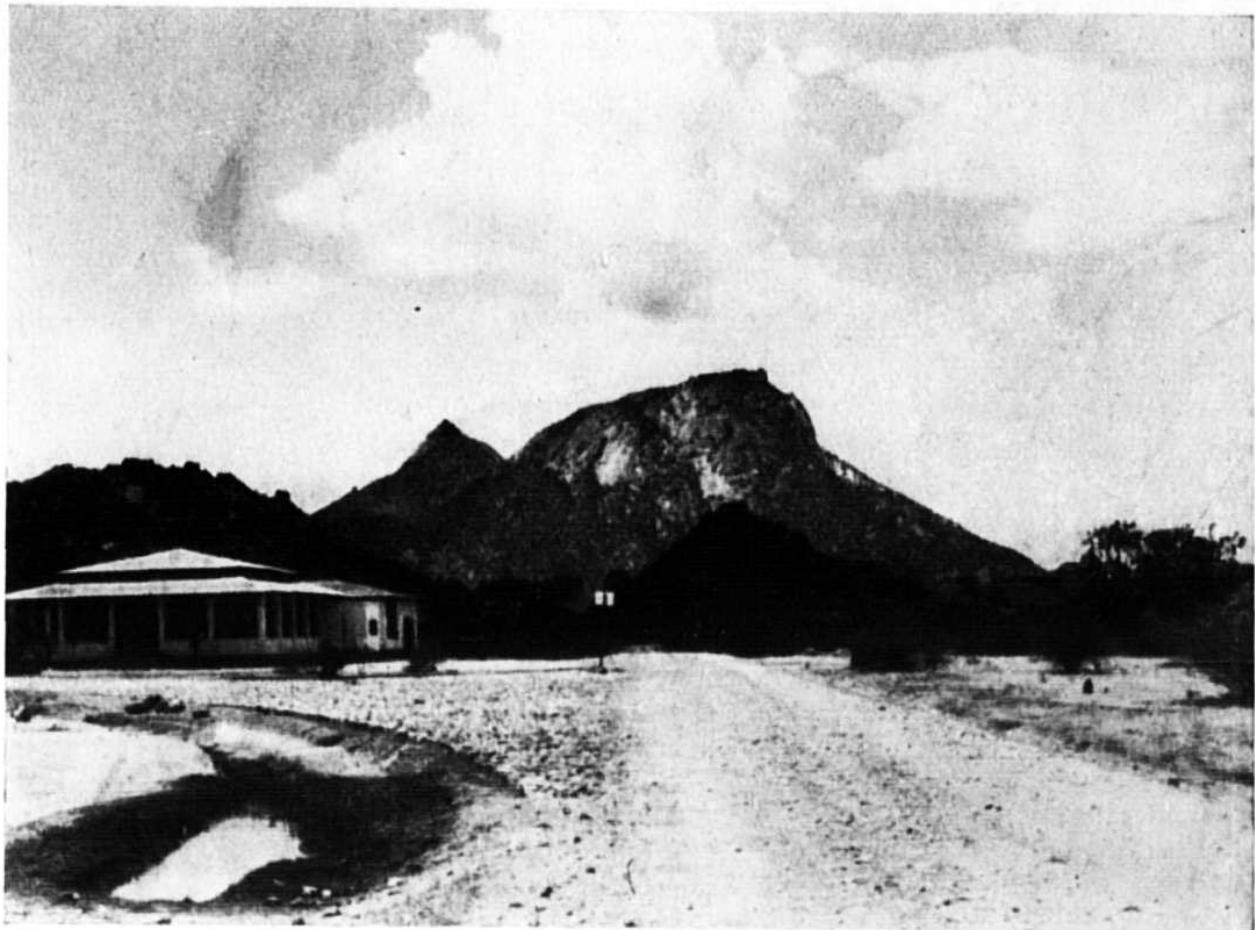


RETTIFILO ENTRO ADDIS ALEM. (KM. 56)



GRANDE SICOMORO PRESSO IL CANTIERE DI GHEDÒ.  
ALLA BASE È L'ALTARE

STRADA ASMARA - BARENTU' - SABDERAT



CASA CANTONIERA DI TESSENEI AL BIVIO PER SABDERAT



IL NOME DEL DUCE INCISO SUL GRANITO LUNGO LA STRADA TESSENEI SABDERAT

STRADA ASMARA - BARENTU' - SABDERAT



PONTE AD 1 LUCE DI M. 12 SUL TORRENTE AMBARAS PROGR. KM. 88



PONTE AFFIANCATO A QUELLO FERROVIARIO SUL TORRENTE DOROTAI (5 LUCI DI M. 10)

STRADA ASMARA - BARENTU' - SABDERAT



ALLARGAMENTO DELLA STRADA AL KM. 57.



PONTE AD 1 ARCATA DI M. 30 E 6 TRAVATE DI M. 10 SUL T. ABRANCAGUA



THE FOREIGN SERVICE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

20968

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

NOV 11 1937

24  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

No. 610

AMERICAN EMBASSY

ROME, October 22, 1937.

Subject: Road Construction in Ethiopia.

DRAFT DISTRIBUTION - CHECK

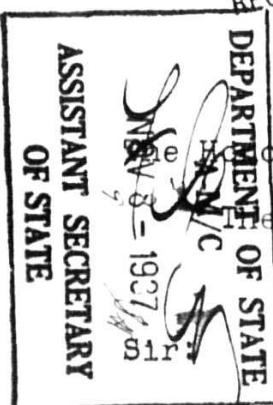
To the Field

In U. S. A.

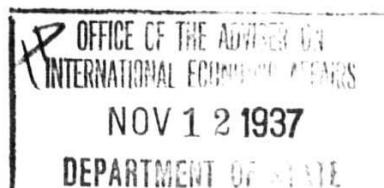
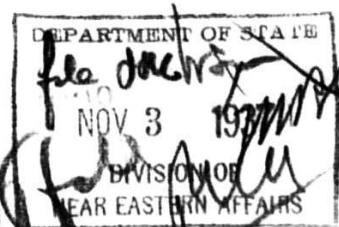
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TELEGRAMS  
NOV 10 1937

NOV 10 1937

A-M/C  
RECORDING DESK  
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Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.



865D • 154/25

Supplementing the Embassy's despatch No. 592 of  
October 2, 1937, concerning the progress of road construction in Ethiopia, and despatch No. 446 of June 24, 1937, concerning extraordinary appropriations for public works in East Africa, I have the honor to inform the Department that a Royal Decree-Law, No. 1715 of August 28, 1937, published in the OFFICIAL GAZETTE of October 15, 1937, provides for the allotment of 3,000 million lire for the completion of road projects now under way. Expenditures are to be spread over a period of four fiscal years, beginning with....

NOV 12 1937

with 1936-1937, as follows:

	1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40	Total
Construction of new roads and completion of roads now under construction.	837	997	478.5	478.5	2791
Maintenance of road sections already completed.	36	19.4	9.7	9.7	74.8
Wages, expenses of personnel and misc. expenses.	27	83.6	11.8	11.8	134.2
	900	1100.0	500.0	500.0	3000.0

Of this total 2,394 million lire is allotted for the construction of new roads and 397 million for the completion of roads now under construction.

Respectfully yours,

*Edward L. Reed*

Edward L. Reed  
Chargeé d'Affaires a.i.

X

**865d.154/26 and /27 transferred to**

**865c.154**

**lec**

**865D.154/26 AND 27**

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

865D.154/28

SEE 8654.00/22 FOR despatch # 99

FROM Aden ( Chiperfield ) DATED Nov. 6, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127 600

28

REGARDING: Condition of the motor roads to Addis Ababa.

a

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.51/15 FOR #779

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Jan. 28, 1938  
TO NAME 1-1127 680

## REGARDING:

Road construction in Ethiopia.

Visit of the Minister of Public Works to Ethiopia and his comments  
on status of -.

865D. 154 /29

## DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE 865d.51/16

#861

FROM Italy ( Phillips ) DATED Apr.12, 1938  
TO NAME 1-1127 861

## REGARDING:

State of construction of six principal roads in Ethiopia.

Table showing -.

8

W1

MILITARY ATTACHE  
American Embassy

Office Chief  
MIL. INTELL. DIV.

6-2 Report



1986

4210  
E-91

7  
WAR DEPARTMENT  
4600

ITALY (COMBAT - ARMY) - (ECONOMIC)

Subject : Minor Military Operations.  
Roads - General.

Road Building in East Africa.

Reference is made to "Note" in Evaluation of Reports, Balkans and Near East Section and to Reports ITALY Nos. 15784-6920, February 5, 1937 and 15851-6920, March 5, 1937.

154  
151  
Inclosed herewith a book which has recently been published entitled "Strade Imperiali" by Signor Giuseppe Cobelli Gigli, Minister of Public Works. This book contains numerous photographs of the roads in East Africa and the construction of some and also considerable detailed construction data.

Inclosures :

1 Book - "Strade Imperiali",

G.H. PAYNE,  
Colonel, Field Artillery,  
Military Attaché

JUN 13 1938

FILED

365D. 154/31

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEE ..... 865d.00/34 ..... FOR ..... Report #44 .....

FROM ..... Naples ..... (..... McCloud ..... ) DATED ..... April 28, 1938 .....

TO ..... NAME ..... 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: New roads - Italian East Africa.

List of the -- opened to traffic or to be opened  
before June 30, 1938 which have been built since  
May 1936.

865D. 154 / 32

lec

B) Road Construction. Much has been written on this subject. However a brief summary of what has been done thus far may serve to give an understanding

of

of how far work has progressed toward providing a network of good roads in the colony.

Since the Italians entered Addis Abeba in May 1936 the following roads, either already opened to traffic or to be opened before June 30, 1938, have been built.

1. Massaua-Asmara	110	kilometers
2. Asmara-Addis Abeba	1,100	"
3. Nefasit-Decamere	40	"
4. Assab-Dessye	510	"
5. Asmara-Sabderat	385	"
6. Asmara-Gondar	550	"
7. Addis Abeba-Jimma	353	"
8. Addis Abeba-Lekenti	356	"
9. Dessye-Magdala	56	"

Of this total, i.e. 3,420 kilometers 1,035 kilometers are macadam and 1,805 asphalt.

c) Cement. July 1938 has been set as the date for starting operations on a new cement factory at Dire Daua. Its capacity output is given as 1,200 quintals of cement and 300 quintals of "calce idrata" per day. The products will be distributed to the various parts of the colony for use in present construction undertakings. It is hoped that this step and the further development of the cement industry will go a long way toward rendering the Harar section autarchical.

# DOCUMENT FILE

## NOTE

SEB65d.01/526 FOR #91

FROM Nairobi (Smith) DATED June 8, 1938  
TO NAME 1-1137 870

REGARDING: Roads - Italian East Africa.

Statement by Yervant Saatjian that the Addis Ababa - Massawa Road is used a great deal for transport but the transports are often attacked by bandits. This road is not properly guarded by armed forces. Road from Addis Ababa to Jimma is fairly safe as it runs thru country occupied by the Gullehs.

365D.154/33

lec

NO. 2105.

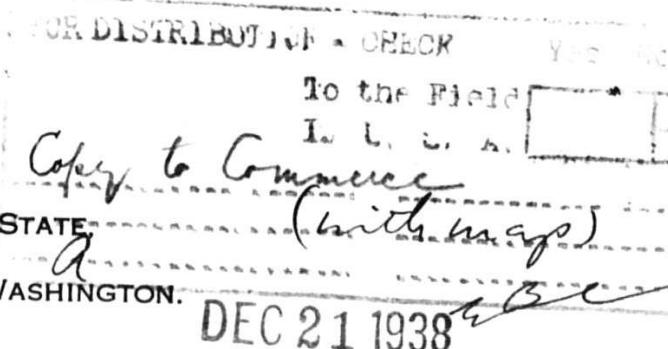
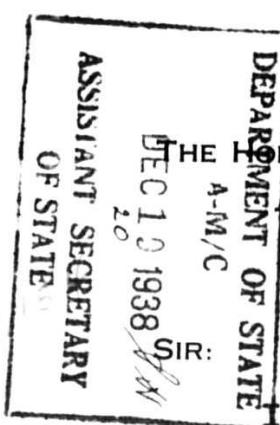
DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

25978

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
NOV 5 1938



SUBJECT: Highway Statistics Questionnaire.



have the honor to refer to this Consulate's  
despatch No. 2062 dated September 13, 1938, entitled  
"Highway Statistics Questionnaire", and to forward  
with this despatch certain information concerning  
highways in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Italian East Africa)  
which have just been furnished by the Foreign Office  
at the request of the Embassy, as set forth in the  
despatch from this Consulate under reference.

From the information furnished it appears that  
the roads constructed in Italian East Africa are not  
considered to be true automobile highways in the sense  
attributed to such roads in Europe and in the United  
States, as they are open to all sorts of vehicles as  
well as pedestrians.

The basic network of roads in Italian East Africa  
comprises nine arterial roads, the total length of  
which is 4,594 kilometers. The Governmental agency

JAN 12 1939  
FILED

N/C

865D.154/34

known as the "Azienda Autonoma Statale della Strada"- "A.A.S.S.", (Autonomous Stats Association for Highways) has been entrusted by the Government with the construction of these roads. Further information concerning these roads is given below, following, as nearly as possible, the items outlined in the questionnaire submitted by the Department of Commerce in its letter of April 15, 1938, 27-h.

1. Road Mileage and Construction Types:

There were 2,816 kilometers of bituminous concrete and asphalt roads completed as June 30, 1938; the remaining 1,778 kilometers are now under construction while traffic for these unimproved sections is at present carried on on the various unimproved roads of the country. It is hoped that the present plan for the roads in Italian East Africa will be completed in 1939.

2. Planning and Financing.

The above mentioned network of highways is being constructed by the "A.A.S.S." under the technical control of the Ministry for Public Works. All of the administrative duties are carried out by the above mentioned Association which has been given special funds by the Government to cover the building of roads in Italian East Africa. The funds are taken from the budget of the Ministry for Italian East Africa, and up to and including June 30, 1938, the amount expended for the construction of roads was 1,992,000,000 lire. The total amount allotted for the construction and completion of the 4,594 kilometers mentioned above is 3,000,000,000 lire.

3. Materials and Equipment.

All asphalt and cement used in the construction of roads in Italian East Africa has been imported from Italy. Up to and including June 30, 1938, the quantity used for constructions of all sorts amounted to 1,834,000 quintals of cement. For the roads with bitumen surface 423,000 quintals were used, a small part of which was imported from abroad.

The following information has been furnished covering the roadbuilding machinery and equipment in use in the construction of the roads above mentioned, practically all of which is of Italian origin:

244 kilometers of steel rails;  
3696 small railway cars;  
80 locomotives;  
272 steam rollers;  
597 crushers;  
365 rollers (hand);  
92 concrete mixing machines;  
294 machines for the spraying of bitumen;  
2070 trucks.

4. Chances for American Participation.

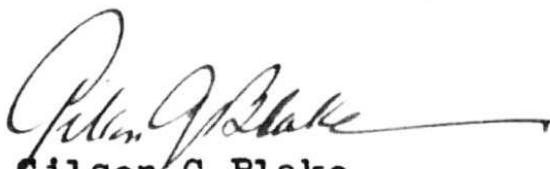
In view of the fact that the construction of highways in Italian East Africa is carried out by the "A.A. S.S." under the direct control of the Government, it is not believed that there is any chance for American participation either in the construction or in the furnishing of the necessary machinery and equipment.

A rough plan of the roads constructed or under construction, only one copy of which has been obtainable, is enclosed with this report.

A volume has recently been published, entitled "Strade Imperiali" (Imperial Highways), written by

Giuseppe Cobolli Gigli, which contains a detailed description of the program of roadbuilding to be carried out in Italian East Africa, a full description of the work done so far, a forecast of what is expected to be done, all very well illustrated and documented with maps and graphs of the work done and projected. The cost of this volume is lire 40.00 (about \$2.10). It is, of course, written in the Italian language. If a copy of this book is desired by the Department of Commerce the Consulate will be glad to obtain and forward it, if so advised by the Department.

Respectfully yours,



Gilson G. Blake,  
American Consul.

Enclosure:

Map, as mentioned.

File 815.4

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In triplicate.

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Copy to Embassy, Rome.

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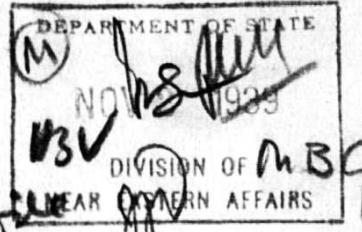
**AMERICAN CONSULATE,**  
Nairobi, Colony of Kenya, Africa,  
August 24, 1939.

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COMMUNICATIONS  
DIVISION OF  
AND RECORDS

SUBJECT:

New Roads in Abyssinia.



THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE, *Copy to M.I.D. NOV 14 1939*

WASHINGTON.

*ON-Commerce*

SIR:

I have the honor to enclose a clipping from the issue of August 22, 1939 of the "East African Standard", Nairobi, reporting on road development in Abyssinia, even though it is possible that the Department may receive the same information from another source.

I have, of course, no comments to make regarding the article, and submit it for what it may be worth.

Respectfully yours,

*E. Talbot Smith*  
E. Talbot Smith  
American Consul

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to Department of State.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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# New Roads In Abyssinia

## TRANSPORT COSTS REDUCED BY ITALY

According to a report issued by Signor Gigli, Minister of Communications in Italy, the programme of both road building and other public works is now well under way in Abyssinia. It is revealed that the four-year roads scheme has reached its maximum development in a little more than two years.

Of the nine main roads, the construction of which has been entrusted to the Azienda Autonoma Statale della Strada (the Independent State Concern for Road-Building) by the end of June, 1939 1,400 miles of tarred surface and 780 miles of rolled ballast foundation will have been completed, leaving little more than 30 miles of track parallel to the road under construction in the direction of Lechemti still for completion.

In this huge effort of construction the most difficult, important and fruitful period must be considered the Spring of 1937, when the fundamental aim in view, after the isolation of Addis Ababa and Gondar, was the connecting up of these two important centres during the rainy season of 1937. This end has now been reached; and, this year, its worthy complement will be the connecting up of Gimma and Lechemti with Addis Ababa, during the rainy season, owing to the work of the A.A.S.S. and the building of the road to Debra Marcos, the work of the Engineering Corps. Thus the utility of this huge constructive effort, which has demanded, as a consequence, such remarkable economic effort on the part of Italy, is clearly shown; it is now evident how the capital employed for road building for military and economic purposes is rapidly repaying itself.

### Lowering Transport Costs

Below are figures denoting the fluctuation, during successive periods, in the costs of the transport of goods from one end to the other of the main road which goes from Massawa to Addis Ababa via Decamere, covering a distance of 780 miles. These have only one factor of fluctuation in common, which is that of road conditions, as the prices of cars have not undergone any remarkable changes and the costs of labour, fuel, tyres and spare parts have remained stationary.

	Period	Cost per Ton
1936:	From May 21	£79
	From Oct. 1	£50
1937:	From Feb. 1	£45
	From April 15	£26
	From July 1	£25
	From Sept. 15	£18/12
	From Nov. 1	£18/4
	From Feb. 1	£16/2
1938:	From June 15	£15/9
	From Aug. 1	£16
1939:	From Feb. 1	£14/9

Note: The above are approximate English values: in the report the costs are given per quintal (one-tenth of a ton), in lire (90 to the £), the road measurements being in kilometres.

This table, it is stated, is the most accurate index of the road conditions and represents, from the period which immediately followed the Italian conquest till today, a remarkable decline in prices following upon the reduction in costs to less than one-fifth of the initial basis costs. Of the road mileage, 573 miles are of the first category tarred surface, 188 miles of the second category and 20 miles of the fourth.

### Results Next Summer

The Dancalian Road, which will shorten the distance from the coast to Addis Ababa from 780 to 572 miles, is not yet in a condition to compete with the prices quoted for the ridge-line road between Massawa and Dessie, because it is not finished as yet. Under present conditions, in fact, the transport of a ton of goods from Assab to Addis Ababa costs over £13.

The fall in costs will be achieved next summer, when the Dancalian Road is completed, with ballast road foundation, four-fifths with tarred surface, and when the entire distance between Dessie (Combolcia) and Addis Ababa is also completed, three-fourths with tarred surface. The far-reaching influence of the opening of the Dessie (Combolcia)—Addis Ababa road will be fully appreciated next autumn, when the first part of Assab Harbour is brought to completion.

These figures, adds the report, are a proof in themselves of the constructive and fruitful work which the Italian Authorities have been able to achieve in Ethiopia in a short space of time.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION

WAR DEPARTMENT

1940

JAN 8

Secretary of War

Assistant Secretary of War

Secretary, General Staff

G-1

G-3

G-4

War Plans Division

Statistics Branch

Budget & Legislative Planning Branch

Adjutant General's Department

Army Industrial College

Army War College

Air Corps (Liaison Officer) DIVISION OF

Air Corps Intelligence Section

Cavalry

Chemical Warfare Service JAN 9 1940

Coast Artillery Corps

Command & General Staff School

Engineers

Field Artillery

Finance

Infantry

Inspector General's Department

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Judge Advocate General's Department

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Automotive-Aeronautics Trade Div.

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6-4 1940 42-E-10

G-2 Report

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THE AMERICAN EMBASSY  
Rome, Italy.

ITALY - (ECONOMIC)

Subject: Main Highway

Any Road Asmab-Dessie (Italian East Africa)

The following is a translation of an article which appeared in the September issue of "Transportation and Public Works".

"At the end of July 1939 the stretch of Dejrealis road lying between Assab and Combelecia was completed up to the point where it joins with the Asmara-Addis Ababa highway. The most important sections of the latter were also finished at the same time. The new line of communication, which extends from the Red Sea to the heart of the Empire, is the shortest and most convenient route.

The distance from the Red Sea to the capital of the empire is only 661 kilometers via the Dejrealis road; while from Massaua to Addis Ababa travelling via the Dejrealis road as far as Befasit, thence along the stretch from Befasit-Dejrealis and afterwards via the Vittorio road the total distance is 1173 kilometers.

The route via the Dejrealis not only offers the shortest route from the Red Sea but also assures the shortest route to the capital from all outlets to the sea, inasmuch as from Djibouti - principal seaport on the Indian Ocean, - passing via Dire Dawa, Mochelli, or Chiguer, one must cover a distance of 1737, 1466 and 1361 kilometers respectively before reaching Addis Ababa.

The railroad line running from Djibouti to Addis Ababa should also be taken into consideration. This line having a length of 785 kilometers is therefore 78 kilometers shorter than the new route from Assab to the Ethiopian capital. This railroad, however, which winds up in a foreign port and is managed by a foreign company, has not been made efficient; neither has the company been willing to improve the terminal or increase the number of freight or passenger cars and locomotives for taking care of the increased needs of the empire.

The following gives an idea as to requirements; while the total amount of supplies transported from the seaport to the capital averaged about 3000 tons daily during the first year after conquest - the present daily average being 1500 tons - the railroad is only equipped for handling 300 tons daily. Therefore had provisions not been made for transporting freight from Massaua by auto trucks over the highway Dire Dawa - Addis Ababa, the capital would have remained cut-off from its source of supply and the inhabitants starved while the merchandise would have been accumulated and deteriorated on the Djibouti docks due to lacking modern equipment.

In any case, however, the Djibouti problem is still on the list for consideration and it must be solved.

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American Embassy  
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Its solution will not lessen the importance of the Dassalik road which has a purpose all its own inasmuch as it leads to Ambolcia, lying at the foot of Dossie, from whence it also connects with the road now under construction that goes to Debre Tabor and Gondar, thereby serving an extensive zone in the high plateau.

The disclosed figures and circumstances serve for evincing the enormous importance and benefits to be derived from the new system of communication with the central part of the empire as well as with all regions on the high plateau leading to Addis Ababa through the 6 principal converging roads as follows:

from the North through the Goggin;

from the West via Lechemt and Sissa;

from the South via the Lake region;

from the East via Dire Dawa.

The Dassalik road is intended to absorb all traffic which up to now has been handled through the port of Massaua, from whence it is forwarded to the capital and zones bordering the two centers. It will likewise absorb the traffic originating at Djibouti.

The distance from Asab to the capital has been reduced 812 kilometers with respect to that from Massaua. The technical characteristics of the itinerary together with the shorter distance were responsible for making the transfer via Asab.

The stretch from Deccmora and Allonata (on the Massaua-Dassalik road) is an illustration of the route taken by our brave troops during the Ethiopian campaign. Since the creation of the Highway Inspectorate for Italian East Africa this road section is now in an advanced stage of construction. It touches the gorges, mountain summits and water-sheds of great military importance... Due however to its winding route and steep grades it is not suitable for modern, rapid, and economical auto transportation means.

On the other hand the Dassalik road between Asab and Ambolcia traces an entirely new route. It has wide curves, long straight stretches and the grades never exceed 7%. The roadway is 9 meters wide while the layer of asphalt is approximately 7 meters across. These characteristics have also been adopted for the portion of the road from Ambolcia to Addis Ababa.

Due to characteristics that ensure efficient handling of traffic, the new highway therefore presents greater improved conditions over that originating at Massaua.

In connection with transportation from Djibouti and taking its inadequate efficiency into account, it has been proved that the average freight rates have been lowered considerably by hauling over the Asab-Addis Ababa road, not to mention the matter of effecting savings in gold as well as inconveniences and delays encountered for unloading in a foreign port.

By reason of its shorter distance and improved technical conditions the Dassalik road permits the following advantages over the Massaua route:

- considerable savings in transportation costs;
- permits transit of fully loaded trucks and trailer cars as well as auto-buses having large carrying capacity;
- travel safety;
- lower fuel consumption per kilometer and less wear and tear on the motor.

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These advantages can also be converted into figures... auto trucks from Massaua cannot haul trailers, making their maximum freight load 8 tons; while the same truck coming from Assab is capable of hauling trailers thus bringing the useful load up to 16 tons.

The running time from Massaua to Addis Abeba is 36 hours while from Assab to Addis Abeba, carrying a load, it is only 20 hours.

Transportation cost from Massaua to Addis Abeba is actually 150 lirea per quintal (220 lbs.) while from Assab the cost is cut to exactly half this amount or 65 lirea per quintal.

The new itinerary also offers greatly improved conditions for passenger transportation.

Four days are required for making the trip from Massaua to Addis Abeba in a medium size auto bus while large auto-busses equipped with every comfort can effect the journey over the new highway in 1½ days including night stopover at Gondar... Hence the cost of transportation via Assab is reduced to one-half of that applying from Massaua.

The Italian East African Transport Company is also studying the possibility for equipping auto-busses with sleeping compartments in order that the journey may be continued during the night; thus by leaving Assab in the evening one can arrive in Addis Abeba at noon on the following day.

The Fascist Government has already started projects for making the central part of the empire more accessible via the new highway. This is to be brought about by building a new port at Assab. Up to a short time ago said port was only capable of receiving small ships and tug boats.

A large almost rectangular dock is to be constructed at Assab. It is among the first group of works included in a vast program for the future organization of traffic. This dock will be surrounded by,

an isolated open sea breakwater 900 meters long and located at a distance of 260 meters from the sea wall;

a secondary quay 320 meters long which, together with the North end of the open sea breakwater, forms the entrance to the port with a width of 200 meters;

sea wall with 4½ meter water depth.

A dock 190 meters long and 30 meters wide will be located in said basin alongside the secondary pier. Two piers will also be joined to the sea wall, the first to be 305 meters long and 110 meters wide while the second will have a length of 325 meters and width of 110 meters; water depth being 9 meters.

Each pier will have two overhead coverings for a total area of 2440 square meters. An electric crane on rails with lifting capacity of 1½ tons and floating scissore (derrick type) with lifting capacity of 3 tons will be installed alongside the above piers.

The general plan provides for laying an asphalt road near the loading space and at the piers. Asphalt will be laid in ring shape at the sides and central sections while the section to be used for storing of merchandise and parking of motor cars and vehicles will have smooth flooring. Hygienic installations, drinking water, electric lighting as well as every other accessory will be included therein.

## MILITARY ATTACHE

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ROME, ITALY

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After preliminary preparations had been made for equipping the work shops and supply yards with up-to-date mechanical equipment for dredging work and for laying of stone anchorage planes the work was begun in January 1938. Rapid progress is now being made and by the end of this year large ships will be able to land at Assab. The project will be entirely completed by April 31st 1941.

Large quantities of merchandise of all kinds have been unloaded up to now even with the use of existing methods and equipment. Upon being placed aboard auto trains said freight is quickly forwarded to Debele and the capital via the new highway.

The unloading of large liners is effected by first transferring contents onto barges from whence it is loaded onto auto trucks. The trucks depart immediately upon being completely loaded and arrive in the capital 2 days later. Never until now has merchandise from Italy reached Addis Abeba so quickly.

In the month of August the daily average was 100 auto trains via the Debele road while in the month of September the daily average was 150 auto trains.

80% of the traffic to Debele and the capital has now been transferred to Assab while the other 20% is effected from the port of Massaua. Upon terminating the work at the new port however, this traffic will be handled entirely from Assab. The port of Massaua will not lose its great importance even after the new port has completely absorbed this traffic inasmuch as it will gradually reacquire vast new traffic for the exploitation of agricultural and mining industries situated in its interior. The port of Massaua must serve not only Eritrea but also the territory of Asmara including the Lake Tana zone.

The Debele road has been constructed through one of the most treacherous and inhospitable regions of the land.

From Assab as far as Jardo (distance of 240 km) the region is composed of basalt layers and volcanic cones; while for the other 140 kilometers up to Asmara there is a sea of sand dotted up with basalt formations which give the appearance of small islands. It can be better described as a lunar landscape being that the region is deprived of water and vegetation and the temperature reaches 55° centigrade (130° Fahrenheit) in the shade. Its only form of life is represented by the passage of caravans of camels going from the sea toward the high plateaus. In ascending to the high plateaus coming from Asmara one has to traverse a very intricate and difficult chain of valleys and basins. The first inhabited center is Betic, 460 kilometers from Assab. This village is located at the highest point and might be termed as the advanced outpost between the inhabited world and the desert.

2840 Italian workmen labored here under such climatic conditions and possibilities. They were organized by 3 enterprises under the general direction of the Highway Inspectorate for Italian East Africa and for 2½ years worked and supervised 29,350 natives of Yemen and Asian origin in the crushing of rocks, making embankments, and building bridges in order to achieve the construction of a perfect highway 460 kilometers in length, with long straight stretches and safely wide curves.

The conclusion of such a project seems like a miracle even to the contractors themselves.

Every Italian workman was a pioneer and a leader; all carried on with pride for accomplishing a work that is unique in the world for its greatness and for the difficulties which had to be overcome.

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Special landing fields had to be created in order that supplies could be sent via airplane to the workshops and supply yards. Water had to be hauled in auto tank-cars for a distance of 300 kilometers. Malaria took its toll of workers from the supply yards located near Assab... and the work went right ahead even in spite of the heat.

Travel ventures along this highway and pause at the margin of the road overlooking the mountains, lava, basalt, sandy deserts and craters filled with sparkling salt is stirred by the silence and fascination of the desert but does not think of the tremendous hardships endured - only a short time ago - by those who explored, lived, and worked in this region.

Now the voyages can be made quickly, safely and comfortably. The auto-buses have air conditioned plants as well as every modern comfort. The stopover places are hospitable, shady and well ventilated".

Annex 1

Road map of Ethiopia.  
Plan of Assab Port.

Sources:

October 1959 Issue of  
"Transportation and  
Public Works"

G. B. Paine,  
Colonel, Field Artillery  
Military Attaché.

Central File: Decimal File 865D.154, Internal Affairs Of States, Public Works., Italian East Africa, Roads. Streets. Highways. Paving., May 29, 1936. 29 May 1936. MS European Colonialism in the Early 20th Century. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link. [gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109730924%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Do\\_mni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC](https://www.loc.gov/item/2010647309/). Accessed 18 June 2025.